



The Lincoln Kinsman

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UNCLE MORDECAI LINCOLN

ONLY LINCOLN RELATIVE WITH WHOM THE PRESIDENT WAS
FAMILIAR

MORDECAI LINCOLN, oldest son of the pioneer Abraham Lincoln and uncle of the President Abraham Lincoln, was born in Augusta County, Virginia, presumably in the year 1771. The name Mordecai was introduced into the Lincoln family as early as 1655 when Samuel Lincoln of Hingham, Massachusetts named his third son Mordecai. Beginning with this early date the name became a familiar one among the American Lincolns.

Mordecai Lincoln of Hingham named his first son Mordecai, Jr., and it is this Mordecai along with his brother Abraham who started the Lincoln migrations westward before the year 1727. They continued into Pennsylvania, later into Virginia, and then into Kentucky. The little used name of Mordecai which appeared in both the Massachusetts and Kentucky families was largely responsible for the discovery that both of the Massachusetts and the Kentucky

groups came from a common ancestor. The second Mordecai of Massachusetts was the great grandfather of Mordecai Lincoln of Washington County, Kentucky.

When the Lincoln family migrated from Rockingham County (formerly Augusta County), Virginia to Kentucky in 1782, Mordecai was eleven years of age, and his early childhood days were spent in the old fort known as Hughes' Station on Long Run at a point where the three Kentucky Counties of Jefferson, Oldham, and Shelby now join. It was here that the most dramatic episode of his life occurred.

Abraham Lincoln, the President, in writing to one of his kinsmen in 1863 mentioned the episode in which Mordecai played the heroic part. He wrote: "The story of grandfather's death by the Indians and of uncle Mordecai, then fourteen years old, killing one of the Indians, is the legend more strongly than all others im-

printed upon my mind and memory.”

The President in his brief statements about the massacre was under the impression that it occurred about 1784, but we are now able to fix the date definitely as the month of May in 1786. Mordecai Lincoln stated on oath in an affidavit filed in the Nelson County Court House that “Abraham Lincoln departed this life May 1786 without will.”

The first land entry Mordecai's father is known to have made in Kentucky was on May 29, 1780, and it included a small improvement, or cabin, on Long Run, Jefferson County. On May 7, 1785, one year before the massacre, the pioneer Lincoln arranged for the surveying of the land and his name appears on the surveyor's report as “marker”. His second son, Josiah, about twelve years of age, and a cousin, Hananiah Lincoln, served as “chain carriers,” and their names also appear on the report. The presence of this small boy, brother of Mordecai, with his father on the farm the Lincoln's owned should be sufficient evidence to prove the family was living there at that time.

A more complete story of the tragic incident might be told as follows: Abraham Lincoln, with his three sons, Mordecai, Josiah, and Thomas, was busily engaged in the field putting in a crop of corn. Without warning they were attacked by two or three Indians, and the father was killed at the first fusillade. Josiah, then thirteen years of age, started for Hughes' Station, half a mile away, where the family was then making their home in one of the fort's eight cabins. Mordecai and Thomas, aged fifteen and ten respectively, made for a cabin

near-by, which Abraham had erected and where the family would make their home as soon as safety would allow. An Indian, despising the ability of Mordecai's marksmanship, stepped out of the thicket to secure the scalp of the paleface. Mordecai from within the cabin took aim at a silver pendant on the breast of the Indian and brought him down. Josiah had reached the fort and warned the settlers, who started immediately in pursuit of the redskins.

When the pioneer Lincoln succumbed to the surprise attack of the Indians he was but forty-two years of age, a comparatively young man, and he left a widow and five children, three sons and two daughters. Mordecai, the oldest, but fifteen years of age, became the head of the family. The old English law of primo-geniture then being in force, he became the heir at law of his pioneer father.

Hananiah Lincoln, the pioneer's cousin, in the fall of 1783 entered two tracts of land in what later became Nelson County and still later changed to Washington County. One of these was on the south side of Beech Fork, the other on the east side of Cartright's Creek. He moved to one of these tracts some time previous to July 1786.

It is very likely that this was the relative living in Washington County who caused the Widow Lincoln to move there. There is no evidence whatever that Abraham Lincoln, the pioneer, ever owned land in Washington County.

Between the years 1786 and 1792 we learn very little about Mordecai Lincoln, but he was undoubtedly home with his mother on the Beech

Fork tract of land in Washington County. When he became of age in 1792, he assumed several responsibilities which indicate that he was conscious of his new place in the community. His age is confirmed by the tax records of Washington County, Kentucky, which reveal that in 1792 he is first listed as a white male twenty-one years of age or over. He entered for taxation one horse, two cattle, and one hundred acres of land.

Possibly the most important event which occurred in 1792, when Mordecai became of age, was his marriage. It is to be regretted that the clergyman officiating at the wedding did not give the month and day, but the court records at Bardstown, Nelson County, Kentucky give the year of the wedding as 1792. Abraham Lincoln referred to the family in some correspondence. He said, "Uncle Mordecai had three sons, Abraham, James, and Mordecai." Three daughters, Elizabeth, Mary, and Martha were also born to them.

The marriage of Mordecai Lincoln and Mary Mudd was solemnized by Father William de Rohan. The bride was the daughter of Luke Mudd, and it is a strange coincidence indeed that Mary Mudd and Dr. Samuel A. Mudd of Maryland, who was tried as one of the conspirators in Lincoln's assassination, were both descendents of Thomas and Blanche Spaulding Mudd. A very interesting story of the Mudd family has been prepared by the Reverend Lawrence J. Kenny, Society of Jesus of Detroit University.

Mordecai, established in the community as the head of a family, then began to look into his economic interests and to investigate the steps taken by the administration in the

settlement of his father's estate. He demanded that the administrator, John Caldwell, give a larger bond which was rejected, but he was finally given the appointment of administrator by the court.

The Nelson County order book for July 10, 1792 carries this notation: "John Caldwell the administrator of the estate of Abraham Lincoln deceased being requested by his security to give counter security refused. Whereupon on the motion of Mordecai Lincoln who made oath according to law the administration of said estate is granted him on giving security. Whereupon he together with Luke Mudd his security entered and acknowledged their bond in the penalty of two hundred and fifty pounds conditioned as the law directs."

The settlement of the estate of his father directly and indirectly involved Mordecai in several lawsuits. A note which he gave to John Caldwell, original administrator of the father's estate, brought him into court on a suit for collection on a note.

Lincoln was also called before the County Court to give reason why he had not entered the property in the estate for taxation. Apparently the condition of the estate was such that no immediate returns could be made, and it was not until 1796 that he finally entered the land in his possession as heir at law of Abraham Lincoln.

The following tracts of land were entered:

- 100 acres on Beech Fork.
- 400 acres on Floyd Ford.
- 1134 acres on Green River.
- 1000 acres on Kentucky River.
- 800 acres on Green River.
- 1000 acres on Kentucky River.

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This made a total of 4434 acres of land, and it is possible there was another 1000 acres which should have been listed as formerly having been in the possession of Mordecai's father. Mordecai continued to list most of this land for many years, although he sold the 400 acre tract on Floyd Fork as early as January 12, 1797 to Benjamin Bridges for 400 pounds. This is the tract of land on which Mordecai's father was massacred. Later Mordecai learned that instead of the tract containing exactly 400 acres, it contained 476 acres. On April 2, 1822 Mordecai received two hundred dollars cash for the remaining 76 acres.

Inasmuch as this is the farm where the first permanent home of the Lincolns in Kentucky was established, a copy of a deed of conveyance in the Jefferson County Court House is exhibited:

"This indenture made this second day of April one thousand eight hundred and twenty two between Mordecai Lincoln son and heir at law of Abraham Lincoln deceased and Mary his wife now at Louisville in the county of Jefferson and State of Kentucky of the one part and Benjamin Bridges

Senr of the same County and State of the other part witnesseth that whereas the said Mordecai Lincoln did by his bond bearing date the 12th day of January 1797 bind himself to convey to the said Benjamin Bridges Senr by deed with covenant of general warrantee four hundred acres of land lying in the County aforesaid on long run, a water of Floyd's Fork near where Hughes' (*sic*) Station was, which tract of land was entered surveyed and patented to and in the name of the said Abraham Lincoln deceased. That the consideration for the said four hundred acres of land was and is four hundred pounds for which the said Bridges executed his two bonds or notes to said Lincoln for two hundred pounds each the first made due and payable on demand being dated the said 12th day of January 1797 and the second bond or note bearing the same date payable the first day of February 1798 both of which Bonds have been paid by said Bridges to said Lincoln and the first bond has been taken up and the second bond the said Lincoln says he has lost or mislaid so that he cannot now deliver the same up to the said Bridges—And whereas there is a surplus in the said tract of land of about seventy six acres and for which surplus the said Bridges has this day paid to said Lincoln two hundred dollars the receipt whereof he doth hereby acknowledge and the said Lincoln intends by these presents to convey to said Bridges the whole of the land contained in their the patents boundaries of the said four hundred acres Therefore this Indenture witnesseth that the said Mordecai Lincoln and Mary his wife for and in consideration of the said sums of four

hundred pounds and Two Hundred dollars to them in hand paid in manner aforesaid the receipt whereof they do hereby acknowledge, Hath granted bargained and sold aliened released enfeoffed conveyed and confirmed and by the presents doth grant bargain and sell alien release enfeoff convey and confirm unto the sd Benjamin, Senior and to his heirs and assigns the said tract or parcel of land, with the appurtenances containing about four hundred and seventy six acres by the same more or less and bounded as follows: Beginning about two miles up the fork of Floyds fork from the mouth of a fork of the same formerly called Tias (?) fork at a Sugar tree standing on the (b) order of the same marked S. B^d and extending thence east three hundred poles to a poplar and sugar tree north two hundred and thirteen and third poles to a beech and dogwood West three hundred poles to a white oak and hickory south two hundred thirteen and a third poles to the beginning according to the patent boundaries of the said four hundred acres of land all the estate right title interest claim and fee of the said Lincoln and wife of in and to the said tract or parcel of land with the appurtenances. To Have and To Hold the same unto the said Benjamin Bridges Senior and to his heirs and assigns—To his and their only proper use benefit and behoof forever and the said Mordecai Lincoln and Mary his wife do covenant and agree to and with the said Benjamin Bridges Junior (*sic*) and with his heirs and assigns that they the said Lincoln and wife will and their heirs executors and administrators shall warrant and forever defend the said tract or parcel of land, with

the appurtenances unto the said Bridges and to his heirs and assigns forever against the claim or claims of all and every person or persons whatever lawfully claiming or to claim the same. In witness whereof the said Lincoln and wife have hereto set their hands and seals on the day and year first written.

“signed Mordecai Lincoln (seal)
“Mary Lincoln (seal)”

Mordecai Lincoln, immediately after becoming of age, began to take his place in Washington County as one of its leading citizens. On April 4, 1793 he was appointed by the Court to view a road about to be opened. And from a great many similar instances in which he is asked to serve in some preliminary road enterprise, it appears as if he must have been especially active as a pioneer good road advocate. On one occasion, however, he was brought before a grand jury to give reason why he had not kept the road of which he was superintendent in repair.

When he was but twenty-three years of age he was appointed a constable of Washington County, and he served in several other minor capacities. He was especially active in jury service and was apparently often at the county seat of Springfield which was but six miles from his house.

He had become sufficiently acquainted with the value of goods to be appointed an appraiser of an estate when he was but twenty-four years old, two appointments for this service being awarded in this same year. And two years later he became the appraiser of the estate of Richard Berry, Sr., uncle of Nancy Hanks.

His livestock had increased sufficiently by 1797 to warrant the recording of the peculiar mark by which his stock was known, and the county court recorded that it was "a half cross out of the underside of the left ear and a slit in the right ear."

There is evidence that Mordecai was given to the use of intoxicants. In March 1800 he brought suit against the tavern keeper at Springfield by the name of William Pile for the loss of a horse. Mordecai claimed that he was in possession of "a brown mare of the value of 25 pounds and did deliver said mare into the hands and keeping of said Deft. as tavern keeper to keep said mare for pay and restore said mare when requested. to the Plaintiff who was at the time, the said Deft's. guest. Nevertheless the Deft. did so carelessly and neglectfully attend to the mare of the Plaintiff that she the said mare was lost or stolen out of the possession and keeping of the Deft." The jury awarded Lincoln ten pounds for his loss.

Another lawsuit in which Mordecai Lincoln was involved implies that he was interested in the breeding of fine horses, but in this instance apparently he got the worst of the trade. He brought suit in 1800 against a certain Conrad Matthis from whom he had purchased a stallion known as "Strong Sampson." Lincoln brought suit against Matthis for alleged misrepresentation, and, after several years of litigation, Lincoln finally gained a verdict against Matthis for part of the purchase price.

One suit in which Lincoln was involved, where a considerable acreage of land was at stake, was a land suit

in which the illustrious Felix Grundy represented Mordecai Lincoln, his neighbor, as attorney. Mordecai alleged that his grandfather's name had been forged to a certificate and that a thousand acres of land had been lost to him. Mordecai Lincoln's uncle Thomas of Lexington, Kentucky made affidavit to this effect.

In 1811 Mordecai Lincoln moved his family from Washington County to Grayson County, Kentucky. Here he lived until 1828 when he migrated to Illinois, settling in Hancock County where he died the following year.

Chronology

There follows a brief chronological table of events which were recorded in the Kentucky Court Houses and from which we learn of Mordecai Lincoln's activities. The compilation stops with 1806, the year Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln married and removed from the neighborhood in which Mordecai lived.

1792

- No date—Mordecai Lincoln married Mary Mudd.
- July 10—Made administrator of father's estate.
- Oct. 17—Name on commissioner's book.

1793

- Jan. 22—Signed a note made payable to John Caldwell.
- No date—Mordecai ordered to give account why he had not entered taxable property.

April 4—Appointed to view road
from Court House to Wal-
ton's Lick.

1794

Feb. 6—Mordecai Lincoln is ap-
pointed constable in the
place of John Stapleford
with Luke Mudd as his se-
curity.

Aug. 8—Served on jury with Rich-
ard Berry.

Aug. 11—Witness on Thomas and
Luke Mudd's note.

1795

March —Brought suit against B.
Clifton.

Sept. 11—Name on commissioner's
book.

1796

No date—On petition for a road from
Ferguson's mill to Mercer
County line.

Feb. —On petition to discontinue
road.

March —Appraiser of James Brum-
field's estate.
Suit brought by Lincoln
against Evans for assault
and battery.

June 2—Mordecai Lincoln appoint-
ed to appraise estate of
Stith Thompson.

August—Caldwell sues Lincoln for
payment of note.

Sept. 1—Name on commissioner's
book.

1797

No date—Name on commissioner's
book.

Jan. 12—Sold four hundred acres
tract of land on Floyd's
Fork.

April 4—On motion of Mordecai
Lincoln it is ordered that
his earmark be recorded as
follows: a half cross out of
the underside of the left
ear and a slit in the right.

May 1—Signed a certificate that
Cornelia Hayden, widow of
William Hayden, who is
about to marry James
Mudd is of age and also
gives authority for his
name to be used as a bonds-
man for said Mudd.

June —John Slack sues Lincoln
for collection of note.

July —Reports on road survey
from Ferguson's Mill to
Mercer County line.

1798

April 3—Pleasant Robinson vs Mor-
decai Lincoln. Appeal from
judgment of Jesse Head.
Judgment of Head con-
firmed.

Sept. 4—Appointed on committee
to view road from Beau-
camps Mill to Court House.

Oct. 1—Promissory note to James
Evans.
Signs note payable to
James Evans for ten pounds
seven shillings.

Dec. 4—Ordered with three others to appraise estate of Richard Berry and report. On a committee to view road from Ferguson's Mill to Springfield.

1799

No date—Roberson sues Lincoln for collection on note.

Jan. 28—Signed note jointly with Peter Sybert, payable to John Slack.

June —Grand jury brought indictment against Lincoln for not keeping road in repair.

Sept. 6—Name on commissioner's book.

1800

March —Lincoln brought suit against Luke Mudd, his father-in-law, for collection on loan made in 1797. Suit against William Pile for loss of horse belonging to Lincoln.

July 11—Name on commissioner's book.

1801

Feb. 3—Signs as a witness to a certificate signed by his mother authorizing the marriage of his sister Ann (Nancy) to William Brumfield.

Oct. 24—Deposition of John Slack on Lincoln's credit.

Dec. 1—Francis Berry was appointed superintendent of a road in place of Mordecai Lincoln with the same hands to assist him as assisted Lincoln.

1803

Aug. 27—Promissory note given to Elias Davidson.

Oct. —Lincoln sued by Yates for assault and battery.

1804

Jan. 2—Mordecai Lincoln and Richard Berry surety for Sheriff John Dowel.

May 7—Purchased 1 jointer, 1 auger, 1 chisel at the Ignatius Elder sale.

July 14—Promissory note given to John H. Harbison.

Oct. 17—Promissory note given to James Catlin.

Nov. 5—One of the sureties for Francis Mudd, administrator of the estate of Joseph Mudd.

1806

March —Sued for collection of note by Catlin. Suit brought against Lincoln by Benedict on assault charge.

June —Caldwell sues Lincoln for collection on note due in 1804.

June 11—Two suits against Lincoln for debt.